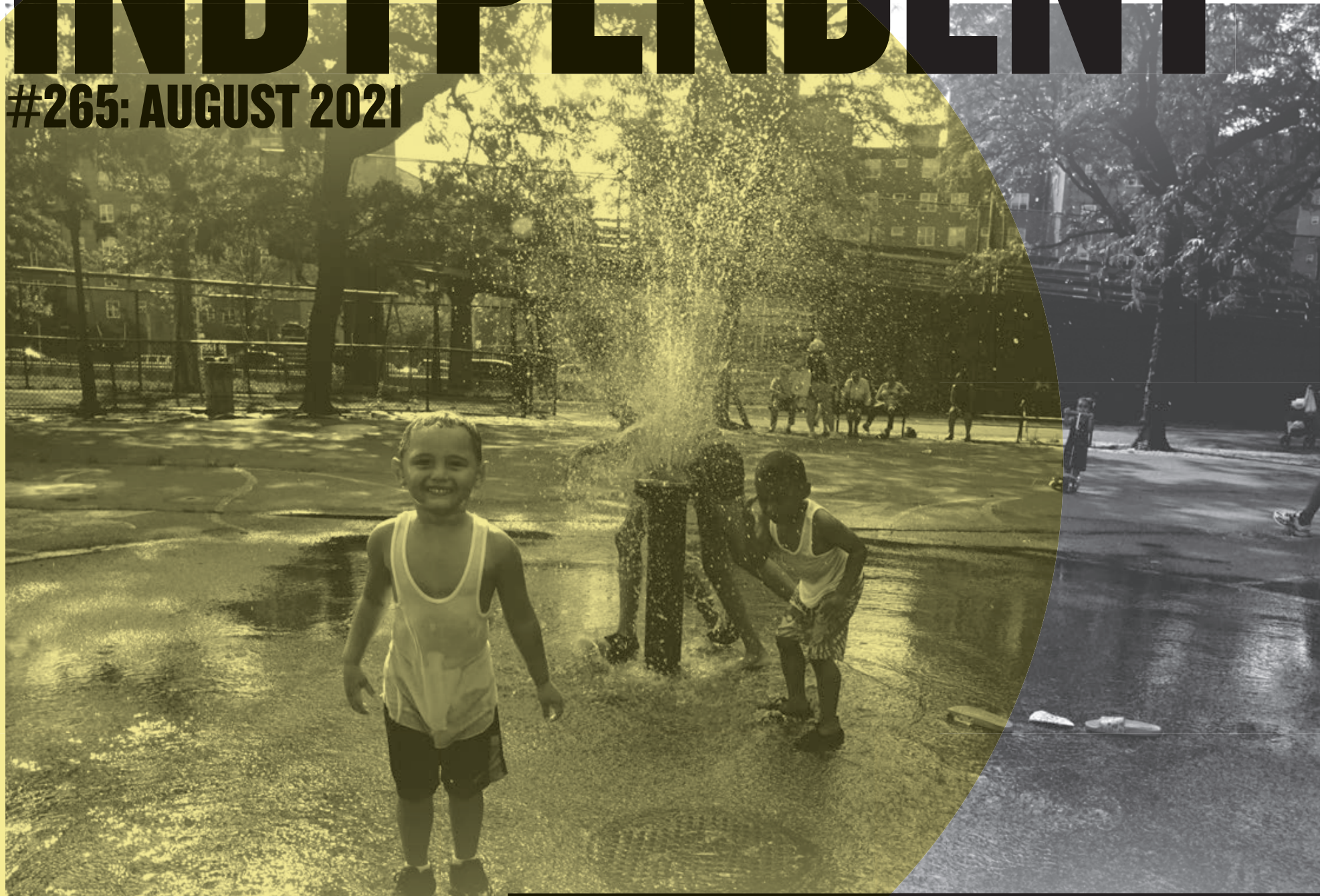


THE

IMMIGRANT ROULETTE — P7 • CLIMATE ART — P18

INDYPENDENT

#265: AUGUST 2021



PARKS FOR THE PEOPLE

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OLIVIA RIGGIO — P10

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Starting times vary • FREE
“Critical Care, or Rehearsals for a Nurse” is about a young lady named Rose who is studying to be a nurse. She takes a job in a nursing home so that she will be able to pay her tuition, books, and living expenses. But COVID-19 rears its ugly head, and Rose has a big fight on her hands: to help to save her city and her own future as a pediatric nurse. In this beautiful street theater story, the old and the new, the old and the young, all come together, to assure us that this pandemic will end, and together, we shall survive. Like the phoenix, we will rise from the ashes.
VARIOUS LOCATIONS
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AUG 6
STARR BAR: BUSHWICK POWER HAPPY HOUR
4pm–7pm • FREE (drinks not included)
Come out on the first Friday of every month for Bushwick Power Happy Hour! One third of proceeds will go to a local activist organization doing amazing work in NYC. This month’s featured group will

be Frack Outta Brooklyn (FOBK), a Black, Brown and Indigenous-led effort to stop National Grid from building a toxic pipeline through North Brooklyn! FOBK will be tabling with merch and ‘zines, plus speakers will share more on the fight and how folks can get involved.
STARR BAR
214 Starr St, Brooklyn

AUG 6
CHILDREN’S MUSEUM: FREE ADMISSION FRIDAY
5pm–8pm
Free Admission Friday at Children’s Museum of Manhattan: With five fabulous floors of fun on West 83rd Street, this is a destination for delight, discovery, and learning! Hands-on learning environments, programs, and curricula are all produced through an alchemy of fun, research, and museum science.
CHILDREN’S MUSEUM OF MANHATTAN
212 W 83rd St, Manhattan

AUG 8
SUMMERSTAGE: MET OPERA SUMMER RECITAL
7pm • FREE
One of New York’s iconic cultural institutions, the Metropolitan Opera returns to Central Park for its 12th year of SummerStage concerts. Met stars Leah Hawkins, Paul Appleby, and Will Liverman present an enchanting program of arias and duets from some of opera’s most beloved works, accompanied by Bryan Wagorn on piano.
SUMMERSTAGE, CENTRAL PARK
Rumsey Playfield (accessible via the 5th Ave & 69th St entrance to Central Park)

AUG 13
MOVIES UNDER THE STARS: RED PILL
7pm–11pm • FREE
“Red Pill,” directed by Tony award-winner Tonya Pinkins, is a visually stunning metaphor for all of our fears and a reminder that there are worse things than death. For Mature Audiences (Horror/Satire).
ST. NICHOLAS PARK
St Nicholas Ave &, St Nicholas Terrace, Manhattan

THRU MAR 20, 2022
ART: THE SLIPSTREAM: REFLECTION, RESILIENCE, AND RESISTANCE IN THE ART OF OUR TIME
Wed–Sun 11am–6pm • Suggested donation
“The Slipstream: Reflection, Resilience, and Resistance in the Art of Our Time” contemplates the profound disruption that occurred in 2020. Borrowing its title from an aeronautical term that refers to the pull of the current that is left in the wake of a large and powerful object, the exhibition examines the placement and displacement of power that runs through American history and continues today. Centering artists of color, “The Slipstream” features works by multiple generations of artists from the 1960s to now.
BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn

AUG 27
CELEBRATE BROOKLYN: YAEJI | KEIYAA | NAPPY NINA
7pm • FREE
This night belongs to Korean-American Brooklynite YAEJI, who rocketed to fame with her full-length 2020 debut mixtape “What We Drew.” In this performance, she will take over the Bandshell to headline and curate a hand-picked lineup that includes the up and coming singer-songwriter-instrumentalist KEIYAA and the prolific local writer, rapper, producer and emcee NAPPY NINA.
PROSPECT PARK BANDSHELL
9th Street & Prospect Park West, Brooklyn

AUG 27
HISTORY & POLITICS: HISTORIES OF THE WORKING CLASS IN NORTH AMERICA
6pm–7:30pm • FREE
As a part of an ongoing series hosted by The People’s Forum, “Histories of the Working Class in North America,” Naomi R Williams, scholar and historian, will give a public talk on unions, race, labor, and coalition building in Racine, Wisconsin.
VIRTUAL
visit peoplesforum.org to RSVP

TAKE IT TO THE STREETS: Theater for the New City’s annual summer tour is back. They will stage Critical Care, or Rehearsals for a Nurse in public venues from July 31–Sept. 12. For more, see below.

AUG 28–29
THE CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL
6pm–7pm • FREE
Celebrate the artistic and creative energy that has made Harlem a world-renowned artistic community as the festival returns to Marcus Garvey Park after last year’s pandemic. The lineup reflects the global impact that Parker continues to have on music and the musicians that make it. Donald Harrison brings his quartet for a collaboration with some of Harlem’s finest string musicians in celebration of Parker’s most commercially successful works, while Willie Jones III has assembled a diverse ensemble of nascent stars and jazz veterans.
MARCUS GARVEY PARK
6316, Mt Morris Park W, Manhattan

SEP 6
WEST INDIES PARADE
11am • FREE
West Indian Day Carnival/Labor Day Parade gathers around two million people in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, on the first Monday of September. As always, you can count on crowds to be waving flags from Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Grenada, Haiti, and other Caribbean nations in a joyful expression of ethnic heritage and cultural pride. The parade marches along Eastern Parkway accompanied by drums, whistles, reggae, and calypso music and sometimes exploding powdered paint. If you’re really feeling it, you can start early on Monday morning at 3 a.m. with the J’Ouvert parade, a celebration of steel pan drums that kicks off the main parade.
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More than 200,000 NYC workers denied federal assistance during the pandemic can apply for special NY State benefits starting in August.

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Faced with ongoing protests, ICE is scattering immigrants they keep detained in New Jersey all over the country instead of releasing them to their families.

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The mayor's race was a debacle for the NYC Left but also offers valuable lessons for how to do better in the future.

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Mandatory vaccinations, Cuomo skates (again) on nursing home scandal, city worker retirees disadvantaged by Medicare Advantage, tenant relief still bottled up.

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Come with us on a long and interesting ramble as we explore the history of NYC's parks and the enduring struggle to ensure they serve the many, not the few.

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The Left wins big in Perú, Hiccups in Brazil, Ben & Jerry's boycotts Israeli settlements, climate conference looms large.

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Cuba is struggling to vaccinate its people due to a lack of syringes caused by the U.S. embargo.

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The Israeli bombing has (mostly) stopped. The media has moved on. But Gazans are still reeling from Israel's latest aggression.

DON'T LEAVE ME BLIND & TOOTHLESS, P16

Steven Wishnia says expanding Medicare to cover vision, hearing and dental would be a huge help to millions of seniors like himself.

THE CARE ECONOMY, P17

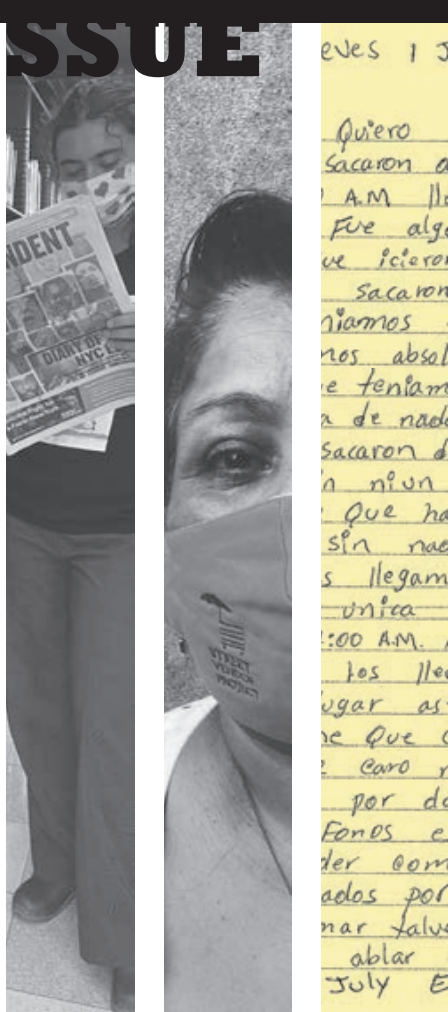
White male factory workers have been replaced by legions of poorly paid caregivers who are overwhelmingly women of color.

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Several outdoor displays this summer invite us to reflect on the climate crisis but struggle to convey its magnitude

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TO TODAY:
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED



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Discussion: **Where do we go from here?** Time: 7:00- 8:30 PM Date: **Tues. Sept. 14, 2021**



Guest Speakers:

Danny Sjursen is a retired US Army Major from Staten Island, who has served combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq and who has become a leading critic of the "forever wars."

Nancy Hollander is a distinguished criminal defense attorney, who has represented prisoners in Guantanamo and other politically persecuted individuals, including Chelsea Manning.

On Zoom. Register at bit.ly/AfgGuan

brooklynpeace.org 718-624-5921





ZION DECOTEAU

BACK IN THE STACKS

NYC'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE FULLY OPEN AGAIN 16 MONTHS AFTER PANDEMIC HIT

BY ZION DECOTEAU

“Libraries are one of the last places on earth — not to be overly dramatic — that you come and sit all day, you don’t have to buy anything and you have access to all the world’s wisdom,” says Fritz Bodenheimer, the press officer for the Brooklyn Public Library.

New York City’s public library systems continue to operate at reduced hours, but Bodenheimer says full hours should soon be restored.

Nearly all Brooklyn, Queens and New York (which encompass Manhattan, The Bronx & Staten Island) Public Libraries, re-opened all their services during July but haven’t returned to pre-pandemic operating hours. Any locations that were temporarily repurposed by the City or are under renovation remain closed. Masks remain required in all public library locations.

“The libraries are one of the most important institutions we have in society. It’s a joy to see other people enjoying books,” said Garrett, who greets library patrons as he sells his own poetry books in the shade provided by the marble lions at New York Public Library’s iconic flagship building.

Library services were scaled down dramatically at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic but bookworms were still able to check out books through the contactless grab-and-go service.

“I actually have been coming to the library throughout the pandemic. I’ve been taking out books, placing holds on them, picking them up,” said Melissa, a Crown Heights native visiting the Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Branch at Grand Army Plaza.

City libraries have been reeling from significant budget cuts and layoffs since last spring. City council’s 2022 preliminary budget report found that in January, The New York Public Library furloughed all part-time hour-

ly workers. The agency also resorted to a hiring freeze on all “non-critical” positions.

New York City’s public library systems will see their funding restored in the City Council’s 2022 budget, dodging an initially proposed \$22 million in cuts.

“The over \$22 million previously proposed cut in operating money at stake would have meant reducing our collections budgets, shortening library hours and operating below pre-pandemic levels, right when our city needs us most,” said Queens Public Library President Denis Walcott in a statement.

“I really missed having a place to go and browse books and work quietly,” Lucie, a Park Slope resident who works for a publishing house, told *The Independent*.

In addition to loaning out books and offering archival resources, libraries act as cultural and even professional centers. At Brooklyn Public Library’s central branch, members can use Adobe Suite on Macbook desktops to work on creative projects. New York, Brooklyn and Queens public libraries offer robust programming schedules that include events such as lectures, concerts and movie screenings and online language classes.

Though the pandemic prevented users from going inside facilities, it didn’t put an end to library programming. According to Fritz Bodenheimer, the pandemic-induced closures brought an uptick in some program participation. “We actually had more participants in our virtual programs and outdoor programs than we had in a normal year,” she said.

With facility interiors having been restricted for nearly a year, Brooklynite R.W. says we shouldn’t take libraries for granted. “I’m also really impressed with how important the library is even in the age of the internet. You see people filling the place up and you would expect that maybe in the age of the internet it wouldn’t be used but instead it’s used even more than before,” they said.

Before the onset of the pandemic, Cortelyou Library in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn was an animated community space. On any given weekday afternoon, one would find people of all ages using the public resources — students studying, elderly neighborhood residents flipping through newspapers, after-school tutors hushing groups of children and teenagers congregating in the library’s front patio.

The Tompkins Square Library, which overlooks Tompkins Square Park in the East Village, was a popular place pre-pandemic for people to seek refuge from the streets, especially on colder days. Unhoused New Yorkers who frequented the location were generally welcomed by the library staff, although bathrooms at the branch are not available for public use.

As patrons return to their neighborhood libraries, Fivel Rothberger, a filmmaker from Ditmas Park, appreciates

how library systems are at the conceptual center of bolstering public infrastructure. “I’m into sharing knowledge and a sense of togetherness — that’s really important to me. I’m a socialist so it’s really important to share resources,” he said.

As pandemic restrictions loosen, New Yorkers are reminded how much access to free knowledge and cultural programming exists in their city. By having a library card, a member can obtain free tickets to most of the city’s cultural institutions once a year through the “culture pass” program, such as Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Whitney and Guggenheim museums, the Museum of the Moving Image and the Bronx Opera Company.

Other venues that can be accessed for free or for a suggested donation even if you don’t have a library card include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian. Both Manhattan’s SummerStage and Celebrate Brooklyn offer excellent outdoor summer concert series free of charge in Central Park and Prospect Park, respectively. New York City Parks offer free preservation and tree planting excursions.

“Space in the city is becoming more and more privatized and the library exists as a place where all people can cross paths, which is less and less of a possibility in the current definition of this city. Different classes crossing paths in public spaces used to be common, but now a lot of that is being foreclosed upon,” said Devon Gilliams, a labor organizer and bibliophile from Brooklyn. “We’re emerging from a long period of isolation and to be able to engage physically with people is more important than ever in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas. I always think of the importance of physical spaces when so much of our lives are online, spaces of respite in a stressful time when our existences are clearly more precarious.”

For detailed info on library hours and services, visit nypd.org/locations, bklynlibrary.org/locations and queenslibrary.org/about-us/locations or call your local branch.

Amba Guerguerian contributed to this article.

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It's been 16 months, but New York City's public libraries once again are fully open. You can browse the shelves, hop on a computer and grab a copy of the latest issue of The Independent.

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AMBA GUERGUERIAN

EXCLUDED WORKERS FIGHT FOR THEIR MONEY

MORE THAN 200,000 NYC WORKERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS OF AS MUCH AS \$15,600

BY AMBA GUERGUERIAN

On April 6, a group of undocumented workers and their allies broke a 23-day hunger strike and celebrated the victory of a months-long battle with a festive rally in Washington Square Park. New York State legislators had just passed the fiscal year 2022 budget and included in it was a first-of-its-kind fund to assist New Yorkers previously barred from receiving government support during the pandemic.

But with the chance to apply for benefits of as much as \$15,600 beginning in August, excluded workers are at risk of being excluded again — this time due to burdensome paperwork requirements.

On July 12, the Fund Excluded Workers (FEW) Coalition and Make the Road New York held a rally in front of the Department of Labor (DOL) office on Varick Street demanding that the DOL make the fund's application process as accessible as possible.

The FEW Coalition says that the DMV, ID-NYC, the IRS and foreign consulates — offices that excluded workers will need to visit in order to obtain proof of identity — have low appointment availability and are experiencing backlogs.

Coalition members want clearer communication with the Department of Labor, who they urge err towards flexibility when assessing the eligibility of submitted documents. They say the department still hasn't answered some hampering questions about eligibility requirements, application accessibility and payment rollout.

"As it is now, not all of the community could put together an application," Soñia Pérez of the FEW Coalition told *The Independent* at the rally. "A lot of our documents have expired and we need to renew them. They need to open the offices."

The Fiscal Policy Institute estimates as many as 290,000 workers across the state of New York could receive payments of \$15,600 or \$3,200 per person. More than 200,000 of those workers live in New York City. People who were incarcerated or detained during the pandemic can also apply if they meet the eligibility requirements.

In order to benefit from the \$2.1 billion dollar fund, applicants must provide proper proofs of identity, residency and loss of income. Workers who are able to prove lost income can receive a one-time payment of \$15,600, the equivalent of having received \$300 weekly payments April 2020-April 2021. If applicants are not able to meet the requirements for Tier One, they may qualify for the Tier Two payment of \$3,200 pre-taxes. The

READY TO APPLY: Members of Make the Road New York celebrating the Excluded Workers Fund during a rally in front of the Department of Labor office on Varick St. in Manhattan.

STREET VENDOR: Soñia Pérez fought this past spring to get New York State to establish a \$2.1 billion fund for workers who were excluded from receiving federal pandemic relief.

DOL hasn't yet provided details on how to qualify for the Tier Two system.

...

IN JANUARY, the FEW Coalition, made up of more than 200 groups, started ramping up public demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. "We fasted for 23 days, we blocked traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge, on the Manhattan Bridge, we slept in front of [Jeff] Bezos' mansion, we marched in Albany," New York State Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa (D-72), who introduced the bill in May 2020, told *The Indy*.

"I don't think we would have won this fund without the hunger strike," said Soñia Pérez, a member of the Street Vendors project who lost her husband to the coronavirus last spring. "We demonstrated that the immigrant community is ready to put itself on the line in order to achieve our goals," Pérez said.

An excluded workers fund was also one of the central demands of the Invest in Our New York "tax the rich" campaign, which, too, saw success in the FY 2022 budget. Anyone making more than \$1.078 million a year will see a tax increase until 2027. These changes should result in the redistribution of \$2.75 billion over the next fiscal year.

The fund was hotly debated during budget negotiations, which were stretched out five days past the April 1 deadline (to the dismay of hunger strikers who thus extended their fast). Arguments between progressive lawmakers and Governor Cuomo centered around the governor's desired eligibility requirements, which opponents said would make the fund inaccessible to many because they were too stringent.

"A whole year and 6 months without any help from government, not the federal government, not a stimulus dollar, not unemployment. Government is supposed to include people, not exclude them," says De La Rosa.

Soñia Pérez says that her community is hard-pressed to make up months of missed rent and that landlords will be the first to receive portions of people's payments. Assemblymember De La Rosa adds, "and hey, all of us deserve to buy a new pair of shoes every once in a while. Think about living in dignity in one of the richest cities in the world where billionaires are getting richer as our communities die."

Go to bit.ly/FEWhelp to see a detailed list of application requirements. To receive updates on the rollout process, you can sign up for notifications in one of 13 languages by visiting bit.ly/FEWnotification.

*Quotes from Soñia Pérez have been translated from Spanish.



AMBA GUERGUERIAN

JUEVES 1 JULY

hola jordan quiero contarle de que

COURTESY

INSIDE ICE'S IMMIGRANT TRANSFER ROULETTE

ICE DETAINEES HELD IN JERSEY JAILS ARE BEING SCATTERED AROUND THE COUNTRY AND RARELY KNOW IN ADVANCE WHERE THEY ARE GOING.

BY AMBA GUERGUERIAN

Amid growing public pressure, Essex County announced in April that it would end a 13-year-long relationship with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and no longer house people detained by ICE at Essex County Jail by August 23.

Since Essex County's April announcement, detainees and advocates have been protesting for ICE to release detainees on parole as they empty out Essex County rather than transfer them to states far away from their lawyers and loved ones.

In what many see as a retaliatory act, ICE is transferring the people detained at Essex rather than releasing them. Around 50 people were transferred out of Essex County Jail between June 28th and 29th.

Since the spring, immigrants have been transferred to states all around the country, including as far as Louisiana and Nevada.

"We had some clients that were transferred to a facility in Nevada and then they were transferred again on the same day," said Jordan Weiner, a pro-bono detention lawyer with American Friends Service Committee whose clients were transferred from Essex County.

In the early mornings of Tuesday, June 28 and Wednesday, June 29, detainees were removed from their Essex County jail cells by armed guards whose faces were covered by balaclavas. Edwin heard his friends being taken away. "They handcuffed them and shackled their legs like crimi-

nals. They left with only the clothes on their backs, without their papers, without any of their belongings, with nada, nada. They went directly to the van without saying absolutely anything at all. They didn't perform the normal processing that they usually do when someone is being transferred out of state," he told *The Indy*.

Later that day, Edwin spoke with Weiner and expressed how scared he was that he would be transferred without his belongings. His fears were affirmed early the next morning. A repeat of the morning before, only he was the one being shoved in the van. "The same thing: Lots of armed cops. No processing, no words, directly to the van."

José (a pseudonym), who was also transferred on Wednesday the 29th, says that since a few days prior, there had been rumors traveling from one dorm to the next that 35 people would be transferred. Someone had caught a glimpse of a transfer list with 35 names on it. Following this news, around 40 detained men went on hunger strike on the Sunday or Monday before the transfers. "Someone from ICE came and said, 'Okay, what's going on?' We said that our families are in New Jersey, and we don't want to be removed from New Jersey. We want [to be released with] an ankle bracelet or bail. He said, 'I don't wanna hear that shit. I am not going to talk about this.' He turned around and left," José told *The Indy*.

José said ICE ended up transferring more people than the 35 names on the original list. "There was a guy who was the leader of the hunger strike and they added him to the list," he said, suggesting the additional transfers were an act of retaliation.

José and Edwin were transferred to Plymouth County Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Massachusetts. They both say that the conditions are worse than at Essex County Jail. "We arrived at seven in the morning. They put me in a cold room. The police are bad here, they're different. I don't know what the laws are here. There's no hot water," said Edwin.

A deportation officer in Plymouth told Jordan Weiner that her clients' belongings were transferred but that they wouldn't see them until release. She is skeptical as to whether they will ever hold again their missing possessions. For José, that includes \$150 worth of personal hygiene articles, \$200 worth of food, \$200 worth of clothing, his tablet and his USB drive which has both personal files and files that he needs to fight his deportation case.

Upon arrival, Eric and José's shoes were taken and they were told to buy new ones. "I had been wearing my new shoes for one day — I had just bought them in Essex — and they took them from me when I got here — the same kind they sell here, white, without laces. And now they want me to buy new ones for \$55," said José.

"I have been cold. I have been hungry. And you took everything, we have nothing. Not our clothes, not our food," he added. "They are saying, 'Buy new stuff.' But how? You don't know the problems my wife is dealing with. You don't know the troubles she's having feeding my kids. And my mother works seven days a week to give me \$100 to buy

food. I lost \$600 worth. And they put our stuff in the trash, as if everything that pertains to us is trash. These people are racist. There are other guys here and they were allowed to keep their belongings. Why not us?"

Both men report prices much higher than those at Essex County. "If something is \$1 at Essex, it's \$3 here," says Edwin, who has not been able to buy new shoes. Phone calls are \$0.14 a minute, rather than Essex's \$0.50 for 20 minutes.

Weiner has not been able to find a feasible way to communicate with her clients in confidence. Her organization is currently using a video chat service called JurisLink that charges \$139.99 for an hour-long call. "That's prohibitively expensive," she said. "My clients have a statutory right of access to counsel and they're interfering with that...My opinion is that it's unconstitutional to make you pay to talk to your client. The due process amendment applies to everyone, citizen or non-citizen."

"We don't plan to stop repping anyone but it strains us so much to have to navigate all these new detention centers," she said, adding that the same pro-bono programs don't exist in Massachusetts.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a June 30 complaint that, if approved, would place a restraining order on the current transfers on the grounds that transfers are interfering with detainees' right to counsel. The complaint was denied.

Since the announcement that ICE detention will end in Essex County, Bergen County Jail is now is no longer accepting new ICE detainees and there is now a 50-person cap on detainees at Hudson County Jail. The privately-run Elizabeth Detention Center is suing to break its lease because the conditions inside the facility are unsafe. In response to these moves, detainees have gone on hunger strikes in Essex, Bergen and Hudson counties demanding they be released, not transferred to other states where they will face greater challenges in fighting their deportation cases.

On July 20, Immigration justice activists blockaded ICE's Homeland Security Investigations office in Newark, NJ, where detainees are taken and sometimes physically forced to sign their deportation and transfer papers before being moved. Protesters chained themselves together in front of the gates of 600-640 Frelinghuysen Ave., the office park where the processing site is located, for five hours.

"Just about two weeks ago, people were transferred out of Essex to other facilities across the country because Essex is ending their contract with ICE," Haydi Torres of Movimien-to Cosecha said at the Newark demonstration. "Ending the contract is not enough. We are fighting back to send the clear message that we want people to be released, not transferred!"

IN HIS OWN WORDS: Excerpts from a letter by Edwin, an immigrant detainee, to his lawyer Jordan Weiner describing his experience of being transferred from Newark, New Jersey to a harsher ICE facility in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He concludes by wishing Weiner a "Happy 4th of July."

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NY GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

A COSTLY DEFEAT

WILL THE LEFT LEARN FROM ITS MISTAKES IN THIS YEAR'S MAYOR'S RACE?

BY JOHN TARLETON

“I am the original progressive voice of New York City,” Eric Adams said on July 14 at his first public appearance with Governor Andrew Cuomo after being certified as the Democratic nominee and all-but-certain next Mayor of New York City. “I’m the face of the Democratic Party,” he added for emphasis.

The scandal-plagued governor nodded along with almost everything Adams had to say and looked pleased when Adams turned to him and said, “We see eye-to-eye.”

For actual progressives there was more to gag on. Warning of “unintended consequences,” Adams signaled support for rolling back landmark criminal justice reforms passed by the State Legislature in 2019 that limited the use of cash bail, that changed the laws so that those as young as 16 would not automatically be tried as adults and that required prosecutors to hand over evidence in time for defendants to have a fair trial.

Adams spoke with empathy about providing more social services for at-risk youth. But in the next breath he warned that the needs of the super-rich must be attended to lest they (and their tax dollars) flee for Miami.

We can expect a lot more of this over the next four or eight years.

Adams ran as the tribune of working class Black and brown New Yorkers while being lavishly funded by real estate moguls and Wall Street-backed charter school interests and backed to the hilt by Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post*.

Adams will forge a powerful emotional bond with his older working class base. He has them in mind when he says his support doesn’t come from people on social media but those on Social Security. Of course, he’s been carefully tending to his other base of supporters as he fills his transition team with representatives of the 1 Percent.

Before we turn the page on the mayoral race, it’s important to remember it didn’t have to end this way. Though each of its three candidates — Scott Stringer, Maya Wiley and Dianne Morales — was flawed, this was a winnable race for the Left.

Ranked-choice voting offered the illusion that multiple progressive candidates could run effectively at the same time. In reality, the inability of progressive forces to coalesce around a single candidate diluted the ability of any one of their favored choices to break out and build the momentum that comes with being a top-tier candidate.

After hovering in the mid-single digits for months, Stringer finally began to gain traction in mid-April, gathering the top endorsements of the Working Families Party, the United Federation of Teachers and the climate-oriented Sunrise Movement while he surged in the polls to a close third behind An-

drew Yang and Eric Adams. The *New York Times* endorsement — the Gray Lady had backed him twice for City Comptroller — appeared within reach. A group of rising young political stars including Congressman Jamaal Bowman, State Senators Jessica Ramos, Julia Salazar, Alessandra Biaggi and Jabari Brisport and Assemblywoman Yuh-Line Niou had endorsed Stringer earlier in the race. Appearing on “The Independent News Hour” on April 13, Ramos vowed that she and her legislative colleagues would campaign hard for Stringer.

“Over the next few weeks you’re going to see us pound the pavement and get out there as a team,” Ramos said.

And then, the wheels came off the wagon.

On April 28, City Hall lobbyist Jean Kim and her attorney Patricia Pastor held a press conference in which Kim claimed that Stringer had sexually harassed her and offered her a district leader position in return for sex 20 years earlier while she was working as a volunteer on one of his earlier campaigns. *Columbia Journalism Review* later reported that Pastor had shopped the story to the *Times* but had been turned down. This was due to a lack of corroborating evidence that has become the standard in recent years for assessing Me Too allegations. Turns out holding a press conference was enough to ignite a firenado of controversy.

Ramos was out the door within hours. Her leftwing colleagues faced enormous pressure from their supporters to follow Ramos’s example. Speaking recently with *The Independent*, Salazar, a democratic socialist first elected in 2018, said the final straws for her were Stringer vowing to continue running no matter what his endorsers did and his refusal to acknowledge that he could have inadvertently harmed Kim without realizing it.

“That indicated to me,” Salazar said, “that this person who was running to be the most powerful person in the city ... wouldn’t be accountable to my base or that they may dislike accountability in general.”

On April 30, Salazar, Biaggi, Bowman, Niou and the Working Families Party, among others, rescinded their endorsements en masse. Stringer’s campaign was effectively dead and so was the Left’s best chance of installing an ally as mayor.

The mass renunciation of Stringer echoed a Massachusetts congressional primary last year. In that contest, the leftist challenger, Alex Morse, a young gay mayor, was renounced by most of his high-profile progressive endorsers after a local College Democrats chapter accused him of sexually inappropriate conduct. *The Intercept* subsequently uncovered text and email threads showing that the scandal had been entirely fabricated by a pair of College Democrats, one of whom was seeking an internship with the incumbent congressman. However, the damage was done and Morse was handily defeated.

In Stringer’s case, *The Intercept* ended up publishing a series of articles documenting false statements Kim had made about her relationship to Stringer and his Upper West Side political club. Pastor, it was also revealed, had been the top lawyer for the previous decade at an anti-union construction firm that Stringer had wrangled with as comptroller over their labor practices at the Hudson Yards mega-project, which has received billions of dollars in public subsidies. None of these revelations disproved Kim’s allegation but they did raise questions about her veracity as well as Pastor’s motives.

Stringergate raises a series of overlapping questions the Left would be wise to engage with.

- What standard of evidence should be met with when a political candidate is accused of sexual misconduct?

- How can the Left keep its dedication to the Me Too movement from being weaponized against it?

- Should there be distinctions drawn between more and less serious forms of sexual harassment? Or will that lead to backsliding into an “anything goes” culture of male impunity that existed pre-Me Too?

- Should we take into consideration how someone has evolved over time when assessing something they did decades ago?

- How should we weigh claims of individual harm vs. collective harm in terms of policy outcomes that might occur when the Left jettisons one of its own over their moral failings? Last summer, liberals waved away credible allegations of sexual assault by former congressional staffer Tara Reade that came with more than a half dozen corroborating witnesses against then-presumptive presidential nominee Joe Biden. The libs weren’t going to throw the Democratic Party into disarray at a time when defeating Trump and keeping him from returning to the White House for another four years was their transcendent priority. Will there be other moments when the strategic rationales of realpolitik should outweigh claims of justice and morality?

While she’s certain she made the right decision given that Stringer’s campaign was already badly damaged, Salazar remains disturbed by how the feeding frenzy unfolded.

“Those of us in the business of preparing candidates to run in building this movement need to be having conversations in which we ask, ‘How would you deal with this?’” Salazar said.

Is there a sweet spot where Me Too accountability, compassion and political common sense can all co-exist?

For progressives, Salazar may be uniquely qualified to facilitate such discussions outside the glare of social media. She is a sexual assault survivor. She’s also the survivor of trumped up felony theft charges she was hit with when she was a teenage babysitter. She won her legal battle only to see that story and a number of other manufactured scandals inundate her 2018 run for New York State Senate. She’s also the chair of the State Senate Committee on Crime and Correction, where she is working to enact more lenient parole laws for people who have spent decades in prison.

“We have to have the courage to reckon with these things in a nuanced and meaningful way,” Salazar said, “and not just be afraid of being perceived as soft on these kinds of issues.”



NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE

BRIEFING ROOM

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

CITY TO REQUIRE VACCINATIONS OR TESTS FOR ITS EMPLOYEES

New York City's 300,000 municipal workers will be required to get a COVID-19 vaccine by Sept. 13 or get tested weekly for the virus, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced July 26. The mayor issued a similar mandate for workers at the city's public hospitals and clinics the week before and also urged private employers to require vaccinations. "We have reached the limits of a purely voluntary system," he told WNYC radio on July 23. The city has averaged more than 700 new COVID cases a day since mid-July, the highest numbers since early May. More than 40 percent of residents have not been vaccinated yet and only 60 percent of city hospital workers and 43 percent of police officers have been vaccinated. Henry Garrido, leader of District Council 37, the city's largest public-employee union, said that while the union encourages everyone to get vaccinated, "weekly testing is clearly subject to mandatory bargaining."

CITY SWITCHES RETIREES' HEALTH CARE TO MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Health insurance for some 245,000 retired New York City employees will be moved to a private Medicare Advantage plan on January 1. The Municipal Labor Committee, which negotiates health benefits for them, voted July 14 to replace the current combination of traditional federal Medicare and a private supplemental plan with a "Medicare Advantage Plus" program run by Anthem Blue Cross and Emblem Health. Unions in favor included the United Federation of Teachers, District Council 37, and the Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association. The five voting no included the New York State Nurses Association and the Professional Staff Congress. "The answer is not privatization. It is to continue labor's fight for a single-payer public health-care system," PSC President James Davis said July 12. The mayor's office said the new plan would save the city \$600 million a year and unlike typical Medicare Advantage plans, would include any doctor or hospital that accepts Medicare.

NYC MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WON'T PROBE CUOMO NURSING-HOME SCANDAL

The U.S. Department of Justice has decided that it will not investigate whether Gov. Andrew Cuomo violated nursing-home patients' civil rights with his executive order prohibiting the facilities from refusing admission to patients discharged from hospitals while infected with COVID-19. More than 9,000 were returned to nursing homes after the March 2020 order and at least 6,600 residents had died from the virus as of last August.

STATE'S PANDEMIC RENT-RELIEF PROGRAM REACHES ALMOST NO ONE

Six weeks before New York State's moratorium on evictions was set to expire at the end of August, only \$117,000 of the \$2.7 billion appropriated for its Emergency Rental Assistance Program had actually reached tenants in trouble. As of July 19, only about 160,000 of the more than 800,000 households behind in their rent after losing income in the pandemic had completed applications. The problems, the Housing Justice for All coalition said in a July 9 letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, include that the application process is online-only, the site frequently crashes, the form takes two hours to fill out and must be completed all at once and foreign-language translations are inaccurate. The state office that administers the program told reporters that the glitches are being solved and that "we are now ready to safely and efficiently deliver billions of dollars in rental assistance." In contrast, Texas has disbursed aid to more than 93,000 tenants and California to more than 76,000.

The online portal for applying is <https://nysrenthelp.otda.ny.gov/en/>. The state's call center is open Monday-Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. at (844) NY1-RENT. The Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty has a hotline at (929) 292-9480.

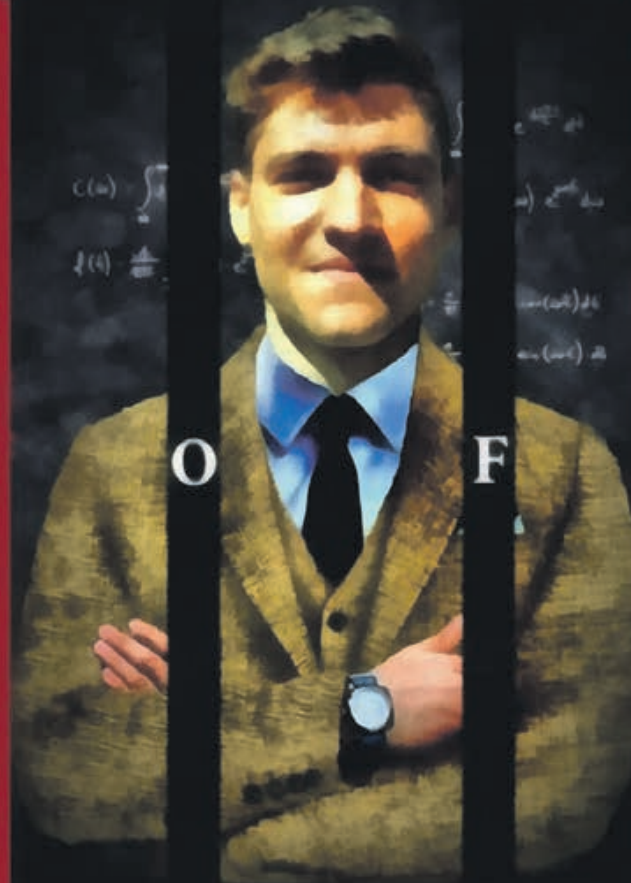
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Death Squads with Impunity

THE MASQUERADE

TED J. KACZYNSKI



Robert Bruce McLaughlin

PARKS FOR THE PEOPLE

PARKS HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT RESPITE FROM URBAN LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY FOR CENTURIES. BUT THEY ALSO HAVE NOT SERVED EVERYONE EQUALLY.

BY OLIVIA RIGGIO

It's a mid-July evening in Maria Hernandez Park in Bushwick, Brooklyn and people are out, enjoying the final few hours of daylight. The sounds of basketballs bouncing and sneakers squeaking echo in the nearby courts. Some people sit placidly on benches, others walk their dogs along the paths. Parents chase children teetering on their bicycles and teenagers skateboard over the cobblestone pavement. A group of 20-somethings sits talking on a blanket in the grass, which, in certain patches, is overgrown and littered with soda cans and plastic bags. Over by the volleyball court, a match has drawn a rowdy crowd along its perimeter.

Maria Hernandez Park may not be a tourist destination, but it is a staple for the surrounding neighborhood, which is largely Hispanic and working class.

Bushwick resident Jorge Leon, who works at a nearby dry cleaner, says he often comes to the park after work to enjoy the fresh air.

"In the house, you're all closed up. Here you can come, you can get a little bit of space and air, trees, oxygen," he tells *The Independent* in Spanish as he sits on a bench along the path.

THE HISTORY OF NYC'S PARKS

Parks have been an important respite from urban life in New York City for centuries. But they also have not served everyone equally. They've historically been used as real-estate development tools to attract tourists and wealthy New Yorkers and push out low-income residents, says historian Marika Plater, who specializes in the history of the city's parks. Plater's recent Ph.D. dissertation focuses on what low-income New Yorkers did for fun outside in the 19th century, when the first of the city's parks emerged.

"Parks were almost never created for poor and working-class people. They were used primarily as a real-estate development tool," Plater says.

In the early 19th century, Plater explains, green spaces in the city served as commons: places where people could relax, but also do work like grazing their livestock, peddling goods, beating carpets and foraging for food. But as wealthy New Yorkers refined their ideal of leisure, homeowners would buy up this land and turn it into parks. Developers would notice the demand for fancy real estate near green spaces and municipal leaders soon got in on the action. This process pushed out labor in parks and led to strict rules about what behaviors were allowed. Working people pushed back from the start; there are accounts of people jumping off the Battery naked and letting their animals run wild in protest.

"What I always try to remember is there was this

profoundly undemocratic history of these public spaces. They weren't made for everybody, they were really made to shape development and control how people navigated the city, but people never let that stand," Plater says.

By the 1830s, the city was still only sparsely populated above 14th Street. As it diversified and wealthier residents began to want out of Manhattan, leaders used parks in an effort to encourage them to move up the island instead of to Brooklyn, which was another city at the time. Gramercy Park, still in the middle of a wealthy neighborhood today, was part of this effort, Plater says. So was Central Park, built atop Seneca Village, a neighborhood made up of free Black landowners and some Irish and German immigrants who were evicted to reinforce the notion that uptown was a wealthy district. Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village and Tompkins Square Park in the East Village also served development goals.

"If we think about parks this way, they're either created to make a ritzy neighborhood or to displace an 'unsavory' neighborhood in the eyes of the displacers, or both," Plater says.

The Battery, in a wealthy area now, was surrounded by a low-income neighborhood in 1876, when residents rose up to protest plans to build an elevated railroad over the park.

Because environmental history has mostly been a wealthy, white and male-dominated field, Plater's work includes critically reading what rich people wrote about poor park-goers, along with court records describing charges against people accused of crimes and public disturbances in the parks. Personal archives were hard to come by, as many poor people weren't literate at the time, though Plater found some diaries that were helpful in their research. Newspapers often included transcripts of speeches at protests in the parks. But Plater says analyzing how everyone — not only the wealthy — engaged with nature is important to environmental history.

"What's the relationship between the environment and humans? We can answer that so much better if we look at a wider range of humans," Plater says.

Plater says these primary documents revealed three main reasons why equitable access to parks was important to poor New Yorkers in the 19th century: First, because they were free to visit and saw a lot of foot traffic, they were prime places to hold protests. Second, they promoted good health. Before the germ theory of disease was established in the 1860s and 1870s, it was believed that "fresh air" was the key to good health and that illness was caused by breathing unclean air. Finally, parks were an oasis from grueling, dirty city life and allowed for pleasure to be not just a privilege reserved for the super-wealthy.



KEN LOPEZ



SUE BRISK

CURRENT BATTLES

We see many of the same patterns Plater studies today. Some of the city's best-maintained parks are in wealthy neighborhoods. The High Line, an elevated park built atop a historic freight rail line in Manhattan's Chelsea and the old meatpacking district, is a tourist destination. It opened in 2009 and is a public park, but run by a nonprofit that relies on donations. Brooklyn Bridge Park is located in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood, where the median income is nearly \$200,000 a year. It is also maintained by a nonprofit, the Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation.

But some parks in less wealthy neighborhoods have become battlegrounds. East River Park, located on the Lower East Side, is slated to be leveled and raised 10 feet as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency project. The five-year project would destroy 1,000 mature trees and hinder access to green space for the surrounding community, which includes dozens of public-housing buildings. The trees would be replaced with saplings and the park would be redesigned to be "low-maintenance" with metal and concrete furniture.

Grassroots community group East River Park Action has been fighting the plan since 2018, which *The Indy* previously reported on. The city has already begun construction on the part of the project above 14th Street.

East River Park Action is part of two current lawsuits: One seeks to obtain a full, unredacted version of the city's Value Engineering Study, which claims to have justified destroying the park in the name of flood protection, but actually reveals alternatives. (The group currently has access to a heavily redacted version.) The other is demanding that the city obtain "alienation" approval from the state Legislature, as is typically necessary when it plans to use a park for any other purpose. The group is also pushing City Councilmember Justin Brannan (D-Brooklyn), chair of the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts, to demand an oversight hearing to investigate the plan.

"It is of and for a low-income community. And that's where the disparity comes in," says Tommy Loeb of East River Park Action.

The East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, born out of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, is supposed to protect neighborhoods from the effects of flooding due to climate change. But East River Park Action has outlined an effective flood control plan that wouldn't destroy the 85-year-old park. Loeb recalls that Sandy did not devastate the park. There's also no interim flood protection plan set for the period while the work is being done.

The city claims it's going to keep at least 42% of the park open at any time, but Fannie Ip of East River Park Action says the plan is not yet guaranteed. Plus, she points out that the 42% doesn't have to be green space — it could be basketball courts or blackout. The group has asked for free ferry service to Governors Island for Lower East Side residents if the plan goes ahead. It was denied.

"Part of the reason is that our neighborhood is a low- to middle-income neighborhood and it feels as though they could just come in and do whatever, come in and say, 'Hey, we're going to destroy this entire park,' she says.

Although the city claims the flood plan is popular, Ip says most residents don't even know about it and when they do, they're mostly against it. The group collected over 2,000 signatures from public-housing residents opposed to the construction.

"A lot of people still don't know what's going to happen with East River Park and when they do find out, they are mostly against it and they are literally shocked when we tell them," she says.

Parks in wealthier neighborhoods don't get the same treatment. Recently, after Battery Park City

residents protested, Governor Andrew Cuomo withdrew a plan to erect a COVID-19 memorial that would remove 2,000 square feet of green space in Battery Park. The historic Elizabeth Street Garden in Nolita faces being leveled to build affordable housing for the elderly, with a luxury ground floor for retail and office space. The group hired civil-liberties attorney Norman Siegel and has built a strong legal case against the development.

Ip says East River Park Action looked into hiring Siegel and found it couldn't afford him.

"We have no resources to hire people or, you know, have someone look at these materials for us," she says.

WHO OWNS THE PARKS?

The city slashed the Parks Department's budget last year during the COVID pandemic. Green-space advocacy groups, including New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), were recently successful in getting those cuts restored. But the current amount allotted to the city's more than 1,700 parks — which take up more than 300,000 acres of land, 14% of the city's area—is only 0.5 percent of the city's budget, according to NY4P executive director Adam Ganser.

"Literally within a couple of months, parks were in the worst conditions that they've been in in 20 years, by the Parks Department's own measure," he says. "New York City's park system is one that has been historically and chronically underfunded. It does not work equitably for all New Yorkers. Many, many, many New Yorkers rely on tiny parks in their neighborhoods that do not provide the same amenity that those of us who are fortunate to live around places like Prospect Park or Central Park have. The way the parks system works is that it relies very much on small parks throughout the city."

During the pandemic, many of those smaller parks were shut down. An estimated 1.1 million New Yorkers lost access to local parks during a time when outdoor spaces were some of the safest public places to be.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL)'s goal is to ensure that every American is within a 10-minute walk to a green space. New York City is 99% there, according to TPL, but the quality of these parks differs greatly. There's \$6 billion in deferred infrastructure funding on park maintenance, Ganser says.

"There hasn't been an administration that has met that problem head-on," he says. "And I think we have an opportunity now with the new administration to really address all of these issues and the main reason is that people are focused on parks nowadays in a way that they haven't been in a long, long time."

In April, NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition co-hosted a forum with the mayoral candidates to outline their plans for the city's parks. NY4P developed a 5-point plan for park equity, which includes doubling funding to 1% of the city's budget, creating a "director of the public realm" to oversee all of the city's public space, creating a more equitable parks system, ensuring all New Yorkers are within a 10-minute walk to a park and reforming the capital process to ensure that projects are completed in a timely and cost-effective manner. The major Democratic candidates agreed to most of these ideas and all were on board with the

Continued on next page



NYC PARKS

Continued from previous page

budget proposal.

Democratic nominee Eric Adams, who is all but certain to become the city's next mayor, outlined his commitments to all five points, but also states that he plans to partner with private conservancies and nonprofits "who can execute work faster and cheaper than the city."

Right now, who maintains which New York City's public space is complicated. Some are managed by the Parks Department. Others are owned by the department but maintained by nonprofits and conservancies. Some parks are owned by New York State, while playgrounds can be owned by the city Department of Education, the Parks Department or the New York City Housing Authority. Waterfront areas may be maintained by Parks, the Department of City Planning, the Department of Environmental Protection or the state Department of Environmental Conservation. Yet other public space belongs to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the city Department of Transportation or others, which is why NY4P is advocating for centralized oversight.

Ganser says the conservancy model became the saving grace of parks in the '70s and '80s, after budget cuts imposed during the 1975-76 fiscal crisis devastated city services.

"You had residents coming together to bring resources and time," he says. "I think it's a good thing. It brings private resources into the city around those parks. What it should do is it should allow the Parks Department to focus its energy on those areas of the city where they don't have those types of private resources."

The problem with this model is these private resources tend to go to the parks that serve the rich; the Central Park Conservancy takes in more than \$65 million per year. Mayor Bill de Blasio backed away from a plan to reroute 20% of conservancy revenue to parks in poorer neighborhoods after the conservancies fought back against it. Instead, he settled for eight of the city's largest conservancies donating their expertise, labor and a small amount of money.

The state of parks today follows the pattern of the 19th-century history Plater studies.

"Conservancies are Band-Aids that prevent some parks from wilting in the context of municipal neglect," Plater says, "but not all communities are resourced enough to fund conservancies, so the result is that wealthier neighborhoods have the parks that are lush and impoverished neighborhoods either don't have parks or have parks that show a lot of wear and tear. While there is something compelling about neighbors joining together to care for their local park, I think that privatizing park maintenance is a recipe for inequality."

Donors to conservancies, Plater adds, often envision parks as quiet, more subdued places of contemplative leisure, but many community members have, throughout history, fought and broken rules to make their local green spaces also be places of gathering, rowdiness and parties. Recently, residents who live in the wealthy Greenwich Village neighborhood surrounding Washington Square Park complained about late-night noise and parties in the area, leading to a controversial 10 p.m. curfew during Memorial Day weekend. When

police descended upon the park to kick people out, they arrested and pepper-sprayed dozens.

As of now, the parks that the city isn't entirely responsible for managing — such as Prospect Park, the High Line, Battery Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park and Central Park — tend to be tourist destinations and well-maintained oases. Those run entirely by the Parks Department — like Maria Hernandez or Friends Field in Brooklyn's Midwood neighborhood — are often smaller and more frequently littered and overgrown.

"My personal opinion is that it's unfortunate that we need to have conservancies — we have to form private conservancies — in order to keep our parks maintained," Ip said.

EXPANDING EQUITABLE ACCESS NATIONWIDE

Brooklyn resident Shira Ungar's Instagram page @junkspace3000 is tiled with photos of green spaces in and around the city and state, hashtagged #everyparkny. One of Ungar's goals is to visit every park in New York and surrounding areas — from the shiny new futuristic-looking Little Island on the Hudson River in Lower Manhattan to the track, football field and playground of Linden Park in East New York, Brooklyn.

"In my project of visiting parks all across New York, it is really, really clear that the quality and quantity of green space available in low-income neighborhoods is really different from those that are available in high-income neighborhoods. It does make a really big difference in quality of life," Ungar says.

Although Little Island is pristine and state-of-the-art, it doesn't have many fixtures useful for community life, Ungar says: "It doesn't give a whole lot of value to people who actually live here. There's not a whole lot of places where you'd sit or play sports or do any of the things that a lot of people in the city use parks for. It's really, like, a concert venue."

Ungar, who works for the Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation, is also a NextGen Trail Leader with the American Hiking Society (AHS), a national group that advocates for improved trail access. The yearlong partnership with the group is similar to a fellowship: NextGen Trail Leaders engage in advocacy, political lobbying and promotion on social media. AHS supports their own endeavors stipends for education and gear, networking connections and speaking opportunities.

Ungar focuses on advocating for transportation and access to parks.

FAMILY GATHERING:

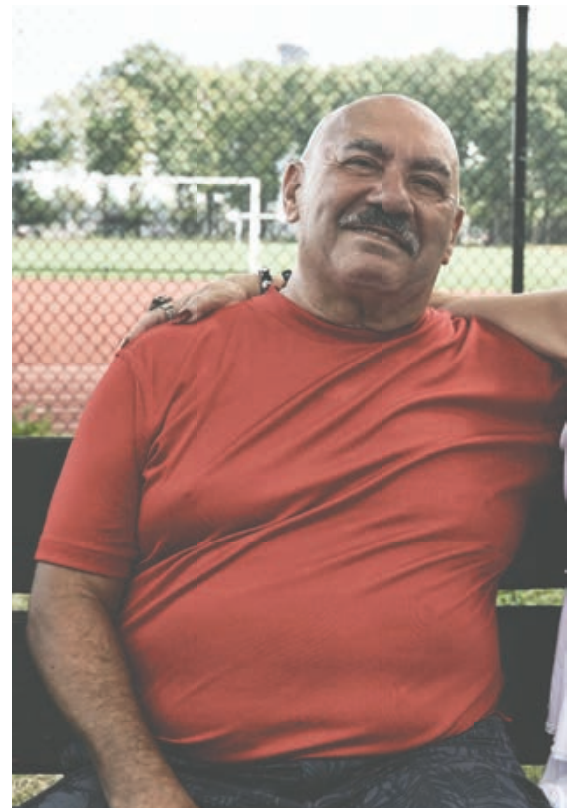
Lower East Side residents fire up one of the barbecue pits on the north end of East River Park.

FORGET THE CITY: A

Central Park visitor gets lost in the park and in his book. The park's 840 acres are maintained by the Central Park Conservancy which receives more than \$65 million per year in private funding.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE:

An older couple relaxes in East River Park. The City is looking to move forward with a controversial plan to demolish the park and build a new park on top of 8-10 feet of dirt delivered by barges.





SUE BRISK



KEN LOPEZ



SUE BRISK

"I think that it's one of the more important ways to create equitable space and to allow everybody to have the same access to public lands and outdoor space. It's a really important thing for mental health and physical health," they say.

AHS is currently supporting the national Transit to Trails Act, introduced by Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D-Calif.) and Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.). The bill would establish a grant program through the federal Department of Transportation that would offer residents of underserved communities transportation to and from public lands.

In March, AHS and the Partnership for the National Trails System co-hosted the 24th annual Hike the Hill event, although on Zoom instead of outdoors. Ungar spoke to staffers of New York Congressmembers Rep. Nydia Velazquez, Sen. Charles Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand to advocate for the bill.

Ungar said it would not only provide access to trails in rural areas for people in cities, but also give people in rural areas access to parks in cities. That would mean more New York City residents could experience natural space outside the city and those from rural areas could experience urban life and visit urban parks.

HOW TO HELP

While New York City's management of parks may remain dubious, there is work individuals can do too. "Love your local park," Ungar says. "The local parks are the ones that are super-important and can create community in a lot of ways."

Aside from advocating with groups like East River Park Action, residents can contact their local parks and inquire about volunteer opportunities or simply go to the nearest green space and pick up trash.

If the next mayor ups the parks budget, it will matter to which parks that money goes.

"You don't want to add funding to green spaces that exist in order to drive up gentrification in those neighborhoods," Ungar says. "You want to give funding to the community in order to make the spaces something that's usable for them and not necessarily just a super-fancy manicured garden."



COURTESY

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

LEFTIST DECLARED VICTOR IN PERU'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Former teachers' union leader Pedro Castillo was sworn in as president of Peru July 28, nine days after the national election authority rejected his opponent's ill-substantiated claims of fraud. Castillo, whose campaign symbol was an oversized yellow pencil, won more than 80 percent of the vote in the heavily indigenous southern Andes. He promised to renegotiate mining contracts so the country could get a bigger share of copper exports. Peru has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 2.1 million cases, 195,000 deaths and only one-eighth of its 32.5 million people fully vaccinated.

AMID MULTIPLE SCANDALS, BRAZIL'S BOLSONARO HOSPITALIZED FOR HICCUPS

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was hospitalized July 14 after suffering hiccups for 10 days. He was found to have an intestinal obstruction and was released four days later. Dubbed the "Trump of the Tropics" for his downplaying the pandemic, insulting women and pre-dawn Twitter rants, Bolsonaro is now facing investigation by the Brazilian Senate for sabotaging the country's response to COVID-19 — including a claim that officials were bribed to purchase 20 million vaccine doses from an Indian company at \$15 each, 11 times the usual price. Some 550,000 Brazilians have died from the virus, second only to the U.S. and only 16 percent of the population is vaccinated.

WORLD LEADERS FIDDLE WHILE OREGON AND SIBERIA BURNS

Three months before the United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, opens November 1 in Glasgow, Scotland, there are significant doubts about whether it will produce a clear plan to avert apocalypse. The 196 nations attending, the British Guardian editorialized July 23, are heading to Glasgow without having made needed "ambitious strategic decisions and collective sacrifices." The G20 economic powers, it noted, had failed to "agree on actions and timetables to achieve global net

zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050," at their meeting in Naples, Italy that week. Meanwhile, the International Energy Agency predicted July 20 that carbon-dioxide emissions would reach record levels in 2023, likely dooming hope of limiting global heating to 1.5°C because of widespread failure to invest in renewable energy. "There is still time to put a safer 1.5C future back within reach," U.S. special climate envoy John Kerry told the Guardian. "But only if every major economy commits to meaningful reductions by 2030."

PINT-SIZED PROTEST:

Ben & Jerry's announced July 19 that it would no longer sell its iconic ice cream in the Occupied Territories.

ISRAEL'S BEN & JERRY'S MELTDOWN

Since the May 21 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, Israel has air-raided Gaza three times (June 16, June 17 and July 2) in response to alleged dropping of incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip towards the surrounding Israeli settlements. Israel has also since arrested thousands of Palestinian protesters, evicted Palestinian neighborhoods in the West bank and West Jerusalem and twice raided the Al-Aqsa mosque (May 23 and July 19).

Meanwhile, support for Israel continues softening. On July 19, Ben & Jerry's ice cream announced it will stop selling its products in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, saying it is "inconsistent with our values." Supporters of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) hailed the move, which came after years of pressure from activists. Israeli leadership and their allies have lambasted the decision, some vowing to boycott the ice cream brand. Thirty-five U.S. states already have laws or policies that penalize engaging in or calling for boycotts against the Zionist state and pro-Israel advocates are urging more states to do the same. Over the summer, BDS actions have taken place across the country to prevent Israeli-operated cargo ships, owned by shipping giant ZIM, from unloading on U.S. soil. ZIM transports Israeli weapons and consumer goods. On July 25, pro-Palestine activists gathered at the Port of New York in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where they picketed and attempted to block a ZIM cargo ship from unloading.

CUBA UNDER SIEGE

“THE PANDEMIC HAS RE-DOUBLED MY COMMITMENT TO MY PEOPLE,” A HAVANA DOCTOR SAYS AMID SHORTAGES, PROTESTS.

BY JULIA THOMAS

On July 11, thousands of people took to the streets across Cuba in protest, expressing grievances that had been building over nearly a year and a half of pandemic-induced struggle and frustration. The primary issue at hand was the food supply shortage that had grown increasingly dire over the course of the island’s COVID-19 outbreak. Most Cubans were calling for their basic needs to be met; wait times to get basic commodities and household items were growing longer and island-wide medical shortages exacerbated conditions at already overwhelmed hospitals in provinces such as Matanzas that were struggling to deal with a COVID-outbreak brought on by the spread of the Delta variant.

While protesters criticize the government’s management of the economy and COVID-19, most Cubans are not denouncing socialism or calling for U.S. intervention. The overwhelming majority of Cubans are pointing to the lack of access to basic goods, which has been largely due to the nearly six-decade-long U.S. blockade of the island.

“Cuba lives in a situation of scarcity that didn’t start with COVID,” Dr. Davel Milián Valdés, a specialist in general surgery and family medicine at the University Hospital Calixto García, told *The Independent*. “There was a big mass of the population that considered the economy their main problem.”

Milián Valdés describes the Cuban Revolution as an ongoing process that is aimed at building stronger systems for the benefit of the Cuban people. “The majority of those of us who are on this island, we are with the revolutionary process. I think that absolutely all of the people on the island as well as a major number of those who are outside the island are against the blockade,” he said. “We’ve been in the process of institutionalization since the revolutionary outbreak of the ‘50s, which had its culmination in ‘59. Little by little, these institutions are advancing towards a better Cuba, a more organized Cuba, a Cuba for all Cubans.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the devastating implications of the economic sanctions on the healthcare system during a global crisis — and beyond. Since 1962, the U.S. has continuously imposed an embargo on Cuba that prohibits trade between the two countries. In the 1990s, the U.S. globalized the embargo by imposing penalties on trans-national corporations that do business with both the U.S. and Cuba. While the severity and type of sanctions have waxed and waned, the U.S. has never lifted the restrictions completely.

Former President Trump imposed 243 new sanctions on Cuba during his time in office, including restrictions on remittances from Cuban Americans to Cuban family members, commercial and private travel to the island and the rum, tobacco and oil industries. He also declared Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism, a categorization that only also applies to Iran, North Korea and Syria. The decision came after the Obama administration had removed Cuba from the same list as part of his policy of rapprochement. In the six years since Obama’s decision, Trump’s State Department could not point to a single act of terror sponsored by Cuba. President Biden has made no move to reverse this measure.

Following the July 11 protests, Biden also announced plans to impose sanctions on individual Cuban government officials. Right-wing Cuban exiles in Florida have called for military intervention on the island — a move Cubans and hundreds of individuals worldwide have openly denounced. In an open letter to Biden that appeared as a full-page advertisement in the *Times* on July 23, 400 people, including scientists, artists, academics and activists, called on the U.S. to lift all sanctions on Cuba.

“Our foreign policy was very deliberate and intentional in all the steps it has taken over the years in enforcing a situation of despair in Cuba,” said Dr. Samira Addrey, a U.S.-raised graduate of the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Havana, Cuba and the program coordinator for the Interreligious Founda-

tion for Community Organization (IFCO) medical school project.

Despite the targeted U.S. campaign against Cuba, the country has been successful in maintaining its commitment to public health. The government has long and heavily invested in its biotechnical sector and developed vaccines in response to numerous disease outbreaks, starting with a response to a spike in dengue fever cases in the 1980s.

Cuba still continues its legacy of medical solidarity campaigns, primarily that of the Henry Reeve Brigade, a Cuban group of medical professionals established by Fidel Castro in September 2005 with the mission of international medical solidarity, deployed worldwide during major health crises, such as the Ebola epidemic. According to Global Health Partners, as of December 2020, Cuba had carried out 53 international medical brigades and sent 3,700 health care workers to over 40 countries during the pandemic.

The island’s national response to the pandemic had been planned months ahead of its first COVID cases (two Italian tourists) in March 2020. For months afterwards, the island was in lockdown and heavily restricted travel and non-essential movement. Hospitals were established for COVID patients, and separate institutions were created for contacts of COVID-positive people.

Milián Valdés told *The Indy* that doctors, medical students and even university students on non-health care paths became involved in what is called *pesquisa*, monitoring of the spread of COVID-19 on a grassroots level by going from door to door in neighborhoods to check in on households and possible transmissions of the virus.

And yet, the blockade has significantly hampered the Cuban healthcare system and prevented it from reaching its intended potential, Milián Valdés said. “One can find signs of the blockade in the daily life of every Cuban and in practically every one of the functions of a hospital institution,” he said.

Cuba’s drug regulator, the Center for State Control of Medicines, Equipment and Medical Devices, recently approved the three-dose Abdala vaccine and is soon set to approve another candidate, Soberana 2, both with reported efficacy rates of above 90 percent. Approximately a quarter of Cuba’s 11 million people have received at least one dose of a vaccine.

“Despite all of the setbacks that this pandemic has put on the island, and especially the blockade, it’s incredible,” Addrey said. “These vaccine candidates are a huge hope for a lot of the developing countries that will never get access to the Big Pharma vaccines.”

However, as the pandemic continues, shortages of over-the-counter medicines and syringes, which are needed for vaccinations, are preventing Cuba from being able to carry out its healthcare vision.

“The hardest blow for my comrades right now is medication shortages,” Addrey says of her medical colleagues who are working in Cuba hospitals. “Sometimes even saline has to be rationed, or surgeries have had to be canceled because there’s no antibiotics for pre-op or post-op. It’s ridiculous.”

In response, solidarity groups in the U.S. and around the world are organizing to send emergency shipments of syringes and other medicines and medical supplies to Cuba. Humanitarian organization Global Health Partners organized with other U.S.-based groups — such as The People’s Forum, Democratic Socialists of America, CODEPINK and others — to send 6 million syringes to Cuba, with support from thousands of people in the U.S. The first shipment of two million syringes arrived in Cuba on July 17 and shipments of medical aid are also expected to come from countries including Mexico and Russia.

As Cuba continues to administer vaccine doses and carry out its mission of medical solidarity for its own people as well as those of other countries experiencing vaccine inequities, its healthcare system remains a reflection of its values of universal healthcare as a human right and the collective well-being of the Cuban people.

“The pandemic has reinforced my commitment to my people,” Milián Valdés said. “We will come out of this better and stronger because of all the processes that will be subsequent to the protests of July 11 with better capacity to see ourselves from the inside, to see our problems and to reach solutions with our own efforts.”

All quotes except for those from Dr. Samira Addrey have been translated from Spanish.





JCP AP

AFTER THE BOMBS STOP FALLING, GAZA STRUGGLES TO REBUILD

BY WAFAA ALUDAINI

For 11 days in May, Israeli warplanes streaked over the Gaza Strip, reigning death and destruction on the people of this small coastal patch of land and sparking worldwide protests. The United Nations say more than 260 Palestinians, including 69 children, were killed and more than 70,000 displaced in a one-sided military battle the Israelis compare to “mowing the lawn.”

What happens after a ceasefire goes into effect and mainstream media moves on to the next eye-grabbing international crisis?

Here in Gaza more than two months after the ceasefire, the desolation of war is felt everywhere. Thousands of Gazans have been displaced. Some have moved in with relatives. Others have erected tents atop the rubble of their destroyed homes. Children wake up from nightmares. Adults remember those they rescued and those they could not. Businessmen wonder how they will rebuild their enterprises. Drinking water, saltier and more polluted than before, is in short supply.

Sitting in her partially wrecked cottage north of Gaza City, four-year-old Hala Alattar recalls the night when she and her family fled from their house barefooted when Israeli bombs landed nearby. “My daughter wakes me up regularly at night screaming for me to protect her from the warplanes that are above her sky,” says Hala’s mother.

Six-year-old Suzy Ishkuntana appeared from under the rubble covered in dust after Israeli warplanes bombed her home on Al-Wihda St. in a before-dawn attack. Her mother and four siblings were killed in the blast. Her father, who had left the house to buy snacks for his children, was killed by the same airstrike while on his way home.

Orphaned, Suzy won’t speak to anybody but her grandparents. “She described seeing her little brothers and sisters covered in blood calling out for their father and their mother to save them until their voices faded away,” said her grandmother, who says Suzy now barely speaks or eats and continually asks for her mother. “When she asks, I tell her that your mother and siblings are in paradise,

and she says, ‘I want to die to be with them.’”

Psychologist Inas Al-Khatib says that the loss of parents and the destruction of their homes are among the most traumatic experiences a child can suffer. “Common symptomatic behaviors that appear in children following trauma include involuntary urination, loss of appetite, and unwillingness to speak, as well as violent outbursts and screaming,” says Al-Khatib. She adds that mental health care services in Gaza are insufficient to deal with the extent of the problems suffered by those who have survived the war.

Paramedic Mahmoud Hamed recalls a man and his mother, hidden under the rubble, screaming for him to remove the detritus trapping their bodies. After eventually managing to do so, he watched as more paramedics extracted first the mother, then her son.

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the initial material losses in Gaza amounted to tens of millions of dollars and 75,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes, of whom over 28,700 sought refuge in UNRWA schools. The bombing of Gaza caused over \$40 million in damages to factories and the industrial sector of the Gaza Strip. In addition, the energy sector faces damages amounting to \$22 million. Gaza’s Ministry of Agriculture estimates damages of about \$27 million, including the destruction of agricultural lands.

Almond trees grew so well in Palestine that when asked how they are doing, locals would reply by saying “almond!” — a sign of goodness, health, greatness. No longer. Now, only 800 dunams (0.8 square kilometres worth) are cultivated. Deir AlBalah, a town in the middle of the Gaza Strip was once a terrain dotted with almond trees but now is a site of barren land.

Engineer Ramadan Al-Najili lost his home and company which he owned in the Khalil Building in Gaza City, which was flattened by 4 Israeli air strikes. “We survived the aggression; we only have the clothes on our backs now,” Al-Najili said. “I spent years in a small printing company until my dreams came true, but it was destroyed in seconds by the Israeli occupation’s hatred.”

The Vice President of the Federation of Industries, Ali Al-Hayek, said that the industrial sector in Gaza incurred direct and indirect losses estimated at \$1.2 billion since 2000, well before this most recent attack, due to policies of neglect and the Israeli siege, as well as repeated aggressions on the blockaded coastal enclave. According to Al-Hayek, the industrial sector is on the brink of collapse. The vast majority of factories are forced to close their doors due to destruction and lack of compensation. Other factories have plunged their owners into debt, which has led them to borrow from banks. In some instances, failure to repay loans has led to debtors’ imprisonment.

“Whenever there is a war in Gaza, it sets us back 20 years. Whenever we try to improve the economy, they destroy it,” Gazan Mr. Abul Ouf told *The Times*.

The head of the Federation of Metallurgical and Engineering Industries, Muhammad Al-Mansi, said that the occupation utterly destroyed the economic infrastructure during the last aggression. The Federation is conducting a census of what the airstrikes destroyed through specialized committees in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, evaluating damage to stores, machinery, equipment, raw materials and products. “We have not yet finished evaluating the damages that have so far reached tens of millions of dollars,” said Al-Mansi.

“More than 20 factories were completely destroyed. The Industrial State is supposed to be a protected area, according to

international law. The occupation targeted the factories without warning and the equipment was not extracted for its protection,” he said.

In press statements, he noted that 3,000 factory workers were laid off as a result of the bombings and the suspension of industrial work. Al-Mansi further indicated that Gaza’s besieged industry “has not received any aid from anyone. Workers have not received any assistance, which increases their suffering.” According to Al-Mansi, since 2014, when Israeli bombings killed 2,251 Palestinian people (67 Israelis were killed by Palestinian forces), the Gaza industrial sector has received only 10% of the damage rate of their factories for reconstruction.

Sitting on the ruin of what was his livelihood, Munir Awwad, the manager of Abu Iskandar Factory, said, “At least 20 employees, working for long years in our factory, lost their jobs after it was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike.” Abu Iskandar Factory manufactured nylon, plastic, and packaging materials. The factory had been in Deir al-Blah City but they relocated to an area called Industrial Estate, east of Gaza City, just a few days before the bombing, believing the industrial area to be safer. “We transferred our materials here less than a month ago ... But then the Occupation bombed several factories in the area, proving there is no safe place across all of Gaza.”

The water supply, too, is feeble and less potable than before the May air raids. The risk of transmission of infectious diseases has increased. It’s summer’s peak and people are having to drink less water and forgo showering. And the overwhelming majority of Gazans can not afford to buy bottled drinking water.

The authorities in the Strip cannot repair the damage caused by the bombing of the water and sewage networks because the occupation authorities have prevented the entry of spare parts and building materials necessary for repairs.

Israel allows food products and medicines to enter Gaza but pipes, pumps, plugs, control panels, pipe closures, and thousands of other parts are barred by the Israelis because of their alleged military uses. For decades, there has been excessive pumping in the aquifer section of the Strip due to its high population. More than 95 per cent of its water is not fit for drinking.

The status quo, closing of borders and preventing reconstruction materials and the reconstruction suggest that Israel’s stranglehold over the lives of 1.3 million Gazans is nowhere near over.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: According to the UN, Gaza would be unlivable by 2020. Here we are in 2021 and Israel hit us with the world’s most advanced weapons, funded by the U.S. Every time I speak to those who lost their loved ones or lost their homes or livelihood, I become more and more inspired by these people, people who deserve freedom. They show their desire to move forward in this life despite the destruction and the pain that the occupation causes.

Wafaa Aludaini is a Gaza-based journalist and activist who has lived in the Strip her whole life.



GARY MARTIN

YOU WANT ME TO BE BLIND AND TOOTHLESS?

EXPANDING MEDICARE COVERAGE TO HEARING, VISION AND DENTAL WOULD ALLEVIATE THE SUFFERING OF MILLIONS INCLUDING THIS WRITER.

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Senator Bernie Sanders has introduced legislation to have Medicare cover dental, vision, and hearing care, along with other additions such as lowering the age of eligibility from 65 to 60. They would be included in a budget reconciliation bill to preclude a filibuster by Senate Republicans, which would be painfully inevitable if it were a standalone measure.

The legislation is “still a work in progress,” cautions Physicians for a National Health Program President Dr. Susan Rogers. But for me, it can’t come a moment too soon. What are three body parts and functions that almost universally deteriorate in older people? Their eyesight, their teeth, and their hearing. What kind of perversity would withhold care for that?

It’s personal. Medicare does not cover the dental work I need after decades of wear and tear on my adult teeth. That has run well into four figures over the last six months, a serious sum on a freelance writer’s income. I’ve been wearing glasses since I was seven-years-old but haven’t been to an eye doctor in almost three years. The last time I went, they tried to charge me almost \$700 for a checkup and refused to negotiate. (My hearing is not too bad, especially considering that I’ve been playing amplified music for 50 years.)

What shocked me most when I turned 65 was how much Medicare cost. Basic coverage for doctors and a minimal private prescription-drug policy comes to about \$170 a month. Medicare also covers only 80% of doctor and hospital expenses, and private insurance that would cover most — but not all — of the other 20% would bring the bill up to around \$500.

The reason Medicare does not cover vision, dental or health is primarily because it was modeled on benefits provided by private insurance when it was enacted in 1965, says Dr. David Himmelstein, a professor of public health at Hunter College and longtime advocate of single-payer health care. Those benefits, largely provided by employers, were aimed at working-age people, he adds. Vision, dental and hearing care were omitted even though the elderly are more likely to need it, notes Rogers.

The 80/20 split was partially a compromise to defuse opposition from insurance companies, says Rogers, and partially, says Himmelstein, because there was a consensus in the health-policy community that “you needed to have some kind of barrier to keep people from seeking care they didn’t need.” But that 20% copayment, they say, was minimal in the 1960s. Since then, health care costs have inflated so much that it’s unaffordable.

Coverage for prescription drugs, also a relatively small expense in 1965, was not added until 2003.

Private Medicare Advantage plans, which began in 1997, often cover vision, dental, and hearing — but the catch is that they also often have a limited network of providers who accept them and people going outside that network will get billed for the full list price.

The free market simply doesn’t work for health care. The opportunity-cost principle that holds down the price of luxuries and limits most people’s overindulgence in them just doesn’t exist. For example, if I wanted to buy a Fender electric guitar, I’d have choices all along the range from a \$220 Indonesian-made budget model to a \$3,900 custom-made instrument, and I could save up for it or find a deal on a used one.

But if I break my leg, I can’t wait until Bellevue has a sale on orthopedics. If I get an infection, I’d be unlikely to find legitimate

antibiotics on Craigslist.

The current U.S. system has two perverse pricing practices. It forces people to pay the most when they are at least able to work to recoup those costs. And list prices are insanely inflated; Medicare and insurance companies negotiate them down dramatically but the person who’s uninsured or under-insured gets stuck owing the full rate.

The market also doesn’t work for selecting health insurance policies. “There’s no transparency in cost because the costs vary so much and you don’t know what you’ll need,” says Rogers. It is far too common that someone schedules a surgery with a hospital and a surgeon that accept their insurance, only to get whacked with a \$7,000 bill because the anesthesiologist was out of network.

Insurance companies often argue that high copayments and “narrow networks” are necessary to save costs and discourage unnecessary use. The implication is that people must have “skin in the game” or else they would go to

a podiatrist to get their toenails clipped. That hasn’t happened in any country with universal health care, says Rogers, and elderly Americans didn’t “flock to the doctor and overwhelm the system” when Medicare went into effect.

The fundamental choice the market demands is either you pay up or you go without important or essential care. This is both bad for public health and more costly in the long run, because people who go without such care will eventually need it for much more advanced ailments.

The proper metaphor isn’t “skin in the game,” but from *The Merchant of Venice*: “a pound of flesh.”

“The whole idea that the market can control costs is really erroneous. It hasn’t worked,” says Rogers. Instead, the money is “going to a system that offers profits for not providing health care.”

Medicare for All, in contrast, would have no premiums, no deductibles, and no copayments, says Nancy J. Altman, president of Social Security Works.

Having the Medicare program cover people 65 and older, she explains, was President Lyndon Johnson’s “fallback” to provide health care for the elderly after the national universal health care plan envisioned as the next step after Social Security proved politically impossible. President Harry Truman’s plan was blocked in the late 1940s,

THE FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE THE MARKET DEMANDS IS EITHER YOU PAY UP OR YOU GO WITHOUT IMPORTANT OR ESSENTIAL CARE.

when the medical industry denounced it as “socialized medicine” and powerful Southern members of Congress feared it would force the desegregation of hospitals.

Adding vision, dental and hearing coverage, Altman says, “would be an excellent next step toward ensuring that health care is a right and not a privilege.”

It would also be an excellent political move, says Himmelstein: Obviously, the concept of expanding Medicare benefits for people who already have them “has a huge constituency” behind it.

Rogers, however, worries that coverage could be sanded down to inadequacy, such as paying only for routine dental care like cleaning, and not the more complex care older people need, such as partial bridges and crowns.

Medicare, “even though it was a legislative act, it required social movements to make it work. I think we have to remember that,” she says. If Medicare is expanded or Medicare for All enacted, she adds, “we’ll still need to continue social activism to make sure it works.”

And the alternative — as I’d ask anyone opposing adding vision and dental coverage: “You want me to be blind and toothless?”

INSIDE THE RISE OF THE CARE ECONOMY

The Next Shift: The Fall of Industry and the Rise of Healthcare in Rust Belt America

BY GABRIEL WINANT

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, MARCH 2021

The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It?

BY EMMA DOWLING

VERSO, JANUARY 2021

By Teddy Ostrow

If there's a photo that best exposes just how hollow the political and corporate praise for "essential workers" was over the past year, it might be one taken in March 2020 at a Manhattan hospital: three nurses, standing with their hands on their hips, their faces shrouded by masks, their bodies garbed in makeshift gowns — garbage bags — while one displays a Hefty box.

"NO MORE GOWNS IN THE WHOLE HOSPITAL," the caption on the Instagram post read.

Even as care work and carers — mothers, teachers, home health aides and nurses — are labeled "essential," they face meager wages and unsafe working conditions, including exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Two new books address this paradox: *The Next Shift: The Fall of Industry and the Rise of Healthcare in Rust Belt America* by American historian Gabriel Winant and *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It?*, by British sociologist Emma Dowling.

In *The Next Shift*, Winant asks why the industrial union man is praised and conjured as the icon of the American worker, despite his decimation by deindustrialization decades ago, while the care workers who take our vital signs, teach our children or perform other critical services and are disproportionately women, Black, Latinx and Asian, are undervalued, underpaid and until the pandemic, mostly invisible to their fellow Americans.

In surprisingly well-written prose for an academic, Winant concentrates on the collapse of manufacturing in Pittsburgh, the city once synonymous with American steel production, and its replacement by health care as the largest sector of the local economy.

Reading Winant's descriptions of the grueling, blisteringly hot and dirty work of steel mills from the vantage point of the 21st century, one questions the claims that such labor offered workers their best bet in the golden days of welfare capitalism. But indeed, it did.

Coming out of World War II, the U.S. government accommodated a militant labor movement by establishing a tripartite system between industry, labor and the welfare state. It provided economic security for the nation's steelworkers and other working-class people, albeit much more for white men than anyone else. With a national health care system blocked as "socialized medicine," the crown jewel among the workers' collectively bargained benefits was employer-funded, government-subsidized health insurance.

A long period of deindustrialization culminated in the early 1980s, when the steel mills laid off tens of thousands of workers. Nonetheless, through their collective bargaining agreements, these men and their families retained their hard-won health insurance, the use of which by this aging, financially declining population fueled the rise of the hospitals sprouting rapidly along the formerly factory-lined Monongahela River.

White male unemployment ushered women into the new health care workforce by necessity, transmuting their unpaid work in the home into low-paid work in hospitals, home care agencies and nursing homes. Through archival research, Winant unearths the intimate, everyday lives, experiences and work of white women during this dramatic shift. Despite lacking archival material covering Black women from Pittsburgh, who had been far more

likely to work than white women before this shift, Winant pieced together a similar process: from the domestic work to which segregation had confined them, Black women took their garnered skills into new health care positions.

Hospitals and the rest of the health care system effectively absorbed the ballooning surplus population of laid-off workers. But this emergent industry, countercyclically booming in the '80s, depended on the exploitation of these women's labor. (The other such absorber, Winant points out, was the then-burgeoning prison industrial complex.) He terms this process a "decomposition and recomposition" of the working class, the receding of the relatively privileged industrial union man and the emergence of a care worker army.

Meanwhile, Dowling's text concisely yet thoroughly presents the wider hellscape that is the care economy.



Indeed, that quality of care work, as Winant remarks in his book, too, is what makes carers more exploitable. Where care work is not properly funded or paid, carers' caring, employers know, will lead them to fill in the gaps.

Who does the work of caring? Much like in the United States, Dowling notes, the UK relies on "global care chains" through which care work is offloaded, often by the increasing number of middle-class women in the workforce, onto immigrant women from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and increasingly, Eastern Europe. The cuts in funding to key pillars of care provision in the UK have also offloaded the work onto children, informal caregivers, family members, charity and an emergent self-care industry.

Dowling calls these cuts and the schemes to uphold profit through the crises that result — via privatization and financialization — "care fixes." Threading through them is a Thatcherite ideology of "personal responsibility," which, she says, dangerously elides care's structural dimensions. Winant's book is riddled with examples of such care fixes, chief among them was a major 1983 change in how Medicare reimbursed hospitals for their treatments: on behalf of capital, the shift fueled the rise of large, money hungry hospitals; the destruction of small, poorer ones; greater inequality of care among patients and within hospitals among workers and as seen in full view since the pandemic began, the intensifying working conditions for health care workers.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the politically unignorable horrors care workers have endured during the pandemic, the Biden administration has made small but significant steps in valuing care, as welfare rights activists have been demanding for decades. The American Recovery Plan Act, passed earlier this year, expanded the child tax credit, putting thousands of poverty-relieving dollars into the pockets of families. And Congress is now considering funding for home and community care, among debates over what constitutes "infrastructure."

Such public investment is critical, so Biden's moves should be applauded. But any system where those subsidies go to privately run and for-profit care is bound to value profit over the needs of people. Both Dowling and Winant convincingly identify the public-private configuration of the care economy, not just austerity, as fatal for any world that truly wishes to treat care and its practitioners as "essential."

To end *The Care Crisis*, Dowling concludes, "we must reclaim the means to care from the prerogatives of profitability and put better ways of valuing care into practice."

It's a system-shifting ask, but necessary. After all, Winant writes, "we all need care."

Her book is set in the United Kingdom in the decade of Tory-led austerity after the global financial crisis of 2008, but before the COVID-19 pandemic. Britain's health care system has a very different history, but as in the U.S., care workers are similarly concentrated in deindustrialized regions. An accessible read that pairs well with Winant's text, *The Care Crisis* maps how that austerity and deindustrialization, compounded by a fast-aging population, has led to a growing crisis of care.

"In the wake of austerity and against the backdrop of the failures of privatization, overstretched and underfunded public services have left people in the lurch," Dowling writes. In other words, more and more people are not getting the care they need and their caregivers are not getting the support they need to care — or the chance to live dignified lives in their own right.

The Care Crisis weaves together theory and sociological analysis with firsthand stories of care workers, but begins by asking "What is care?" Dowling describes it "as all the supporting activities that take place to make, remake, maintain, contain and repair the world we live in and the physical, emotional and intellectual capacities required to do so." In this sense, care work is "an ethical social relationship based on both feelings of affection and a sense of service."

THE ART OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Maya Lin: Ghost Forest
MADISON SQUARE PARK
THRU NOV. 14

Muna Malik: Blessing of the Boats
GOVERNOR'S ISLAND
THURS–SUN 12–5 PM
THRU OCT. 31

Paul Ramirez-Jonas: Long Time
PIER 66 AT HUDSON RIVER PARK
PERMANENT EXHIBIT

By Mike Newton

It's a strange time to be stepping outside in New York City. There's the still-looming pandemic, the string of nasty heatwaves and, as I write this, the sky is covered in gray clouds made-up of ashes from the massive wildfires on the West Coast. With each new day and each new, terrible news item about cataclysmic weather — flooding in China, Germany and also right here in New York City and people dying in record-breaking summer heat, drought and fire all over the world — it's seeming like this may be the summer where many of those in denial will have to admit that, yes, climate change is real. And it's here.

It's a lot. With climate news, it's always a lot. The scope of the problem feels huge, bigger than anyone can make sense of. Artwork about climate change can often feel strange — like something's missing — for exactly this reason. It usually comes down to one person (or a small group of people) trying to make sense of something that is massively, inconceivably complex.

But of course, people are trying. Through mid-November, we have Maya Lin's sculptural installation *Ghost Forest*, in which 49 barren Atlantic white cedar trees have been implanted into the otherwise lush, green lawns of Manhattan's Madison Square Park. Lin made her name with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., a distinctly mournful and non-heroic work of public sculpture in which the names of the dead seem like they're emerging out of a rupture in the ground itself. Much of her work since then has stayed with the theme of shaped and wounded earth, like her famous trio of "Wavefield" pieces, in which acres of land have been formed into rippling waves, mimicking the swells and bulbs of satellite photography.

Ghost Forest is worth seeing and it's the sort of artwork that has to be seen in person. The starkness of its life-or-death contrasts — ashen white against verdant green — makes the most sense when seen at its natural, life-sized scale, where you can touch the skin of the trees with the skin of your hand. If one of the big problems

around climate change is that many people still just don't think it's happening at all, then it's hard to fault works like this for giving a clear and practical demonstration of the issue at hand: These trees are dead. They died because of climate change.

On view through late October, *Blessing of the Boats*, a public, interactive sculpture by Muna Malik, looks at similar concerns from a more buoyant, hopeful perspective. The piece, which

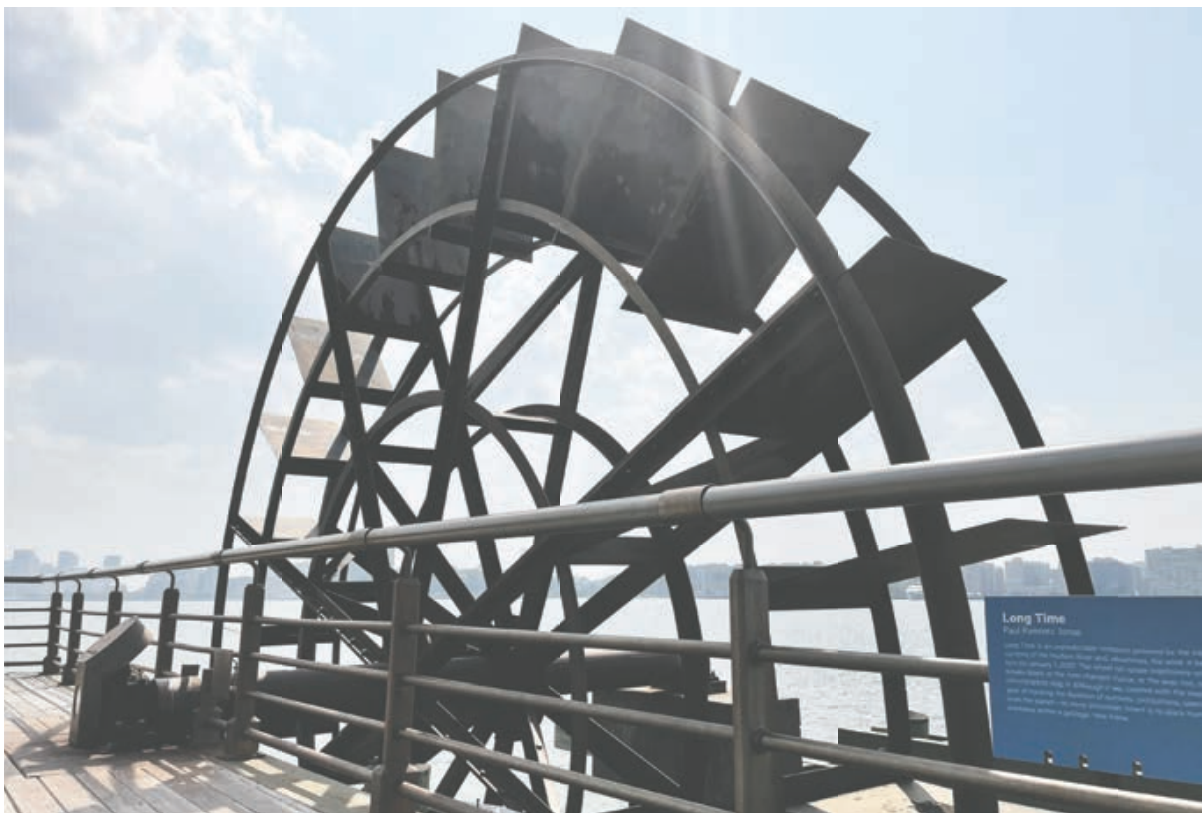
just too small, out of scale with the enormity of the crisis itself. The question follows, what can we reasonably expect? The climate crisis is too big for any one person too tackle and may require forms of collaboration and community-building that have never existed before; maybe it will call for new forms of art, as well.

On Manhattan's Pier 66, you can find Paul Ramirez-Jonas's permanent public installation *Long Time*. The work has been there for about 14 years but it feels much older. It's a large, weather-beaten water wheel which moves gently with the Hudson River tides, evoking an industrial past and a (presumably) more mechanized future. Seeing it is a good chance to stop and consider how short a time our human cities have flowered alongside the rocks and rivers that pre-date us by millions of years. You can stand on the pier and look at Manhattan with all its construction cranes and luxurious skyscrapers, a place that seems, simply put, unsustainable in its current form.

So, artwork about climate change often lacks the sort of fire and urgency that such a major crisis would demand but there's already so much fire. While the climate crisis grows bigger, we'll need to keep space for small things, things that make sense at the scale of human bodies and lives. Maybe as we move forward, art can provide necessary spaces of reflection, solace and mourning. We're going to need a lot of that as time goes on.



KEN LOPEZ



RENNÉE FEITZ

has been installed in multiple sites near NYC waterways (and which is currently one of a handful of exhibits on Governor's Island involving themes of climate change), includes a glimmering, origami-like boat and invites viewers to make their own paper boats inscribed with an answer to the prompt, "We have an opportunity to set sail towards a new future — what society would you build and how do we get there?" It creates its own stark contrasts: a tiny, flimsy paper boat set against New York's dirty, intimidating waters (waters which will, in due time, rise and become a genuine threat to the city because of climate change). The installation makes for a nice gesture — but isn't that just the problem? It feels like we should be past the point of mere gestures.

Art that means to address climate change often feels

SUMMER DAY: New Yorkers lounge amid Maya Lin's *Ghost Forest* exhibit in Madison Square Park.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW: *Long Time* by Paul Ramirez-Jonas on Pier 66 in Hudson River Park.



REVEREND BILLY'S REVELATIONS

*My Good Reverend,
I spend way too much time on my phone screen. Some of it's work-related. I also like to post on my social media accounts and get lots of likes and scroll around and see what others are posting. When I look up on the subway, everyone around me is glued to their phone screen as well. If the first part of beating an addiction is acknowledging you have one, I'm there. But then what?*

DARREN
Harlem

Hello Darren,
I myself have not gone cold turkey. In my own case, I began my independence movement with simple steps. First, I don't go on the screen when I wake up in the morning. I bike in Prospect Park. When I get back to the apartment, again, I don't go the screen first. I go to my journal and write down what I will do when I'm online. Make a list. Then I lay that notebook next to the computer and try to be strict with myself, not drifting down the wormhole of social media or the online news. I go to the bodega if I want a paper.

Increasing the continuous non-screen times, and then writing down reports on my real-time experience, I'm in better shape — but I won't lie, I do have relapses. I recover by feeling the reality on purpose, then growing more freedom from the screen into each day. Then take a full day for a fast, like a Sunday. Some people can do it for a week, a month. Whatever abstinence you achieve, be sure to spend time walking through the green earth. Exercise. Make love. Long walks. Turn the phone off and slow down with your favorite folks.

Build back that real life and soon the real part of your day has a more exciting presence. It might feel unsophisticated, making a note that you are whistling again and it feels good. Cultivate life-time, slow down and taste it. You're making a friendship with your life. Your brain is quietly de-wiring from Silicon Valley and after a while your body and soul will be your enforcer, insisting on the real.

— REV

*Dear Billy,
I'm a middle-aged person who enjoys spending time around older people who have lived well, still have a twinkle in their eye, tell great stories and are still fully engaged with life. To me, they are really special. But they are also more prone to getting sick and dying. This has been especially the case since the pandemic started. It makes me really sad. Should I save myself the heartache of losing my older friends and only spend time around people my age and younger?*

CLAIRE
Kensington

Dear Claire,
You are being strategic toward the world around you as if you have plenty of time to lose. You are holding data that proves that the older people that are more interesting have less time to live. You assume that it's good strategy to spend your time with other people that have more time to spend. You see time as money and younger people as a sounder investment. You think our time remains ticking and tocking forward in the same way that it did before the virus. You are guiding your friendships the way that we used to plan our careers.

Remember when people sought the promises of products? They invested in the objects to secure youth and looks and wealth ... That is all gone. Time has a different kind of rhythm. Those moments you enjoy with interesting, older people? Go deep into those moments. Make those moments expand. Have the drama of living with death nearby. That was always the gift of life. Don't let go of those people and they won't let go of you, as we all share this temporary time together, "rounded by a sleep." Storytellers with a twinkle in their eye can be younger, too.

— BILLY

REVEREND BILLY IS PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING. HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE REVEREND? EMAIL REV.BILLY@REVBILLY.COM AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.

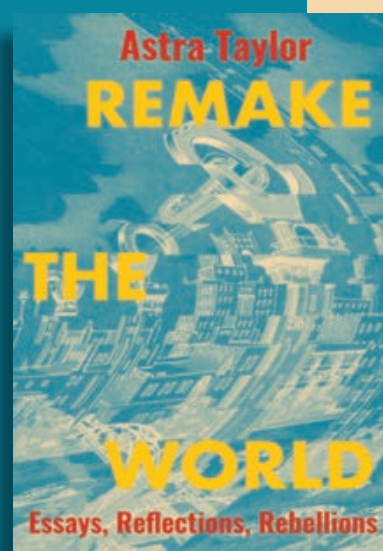
Curious and searching, these historically informed and hopeful essays are as engaging. Taylor's unique philosophical style has a political edge that speaks directly to the growing conviction that a radical transformation of our economy and society is required.

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—Keeanga-Yamahitta Taylor

"Beautifully written in a warm, humorous, autobiographical style, . . . questioning whether anticapitalists can work within the state without compromising their political integrity and whether reform is always necessarily opposed to revolution."

—Silvia Federici

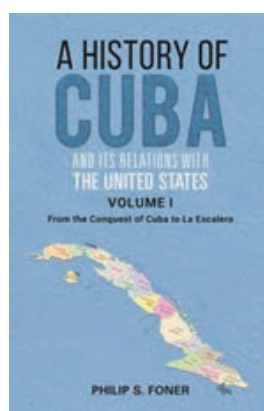


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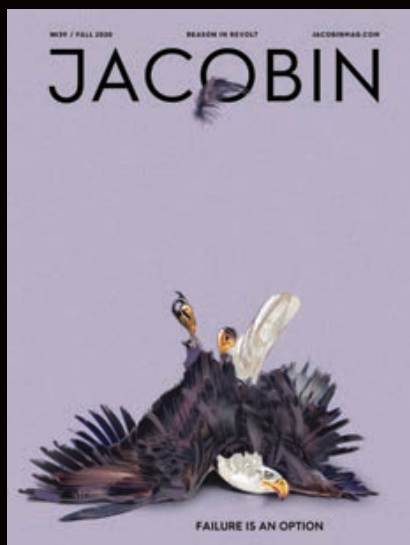


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